



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 16, 2011

Al Gore's "24 Hours of Reality" Was Unrealistic

Big oil and big coal are destroying the planet. That was Al Gore's message in 24 Hours of Reality, which he wrapped up last night at 7. The live, day-long webcast told listeners human-generated greenhouse gases (GHGs) are causing cataclysmic weather events worldwide, and corrupt corporate shills are working hard to sow seeds of denial.

"Climate change is not your fault," Gore told his audience. "Big oil and big coal are spending big money to spread doubt about climate change." He aimed his guns at "fossil fuel interests," and much of the 24 hours compared them to tobacco companies that fought regulations in the 1960s when research linked smoking to cancer and lung disease. Big tobacco denied the problems they caused then, and big oil and coal are denying the problems they're causing now, says Gore.



Time ran out before he had a chance to mention the names of the nefarious, clandestine companies at the root of this climate crisis. Which leaves one to wonder what companies he meant.

Surely ExxonMobil is on the list? No, not that one. The company's chief executive, Rex Tillerson, is squarely in the Gore camp. In 2009 he called for a tax on carbon dioxide emissions in an [address](#) to the Economic Club of Washington, DC. He said a tax would be more predictable and less costly than cap-and-trade plans that propose limiting allowable GHG emissions and fining companies that exceed them. "ExxonMobil is committed to working with government leaders" to fight environmental challenges, Tillerson concluded.

So Gore must have meant British Petroleum. After all, BP caused that mess in the Gulf last year. No, that company has been a champion of cap-and-trade legislation for years. In 2007, then Chief Executive [Tony Hayward](#) called cap and trade the best option to "offer environmental certainty, in the form of targeted emissions reductions, which we need." More recently, BP contributed to British Chamber of Shipping [research](#) published in August calling for an Emissions Trading System imposed by the United Nations' International Maritime Organization.

What about the others? Many of their representatives, including Hayward, then UK Shell Oil chairman James Smith, and leaders of more than [500 global companies](#), signed the 2009 [Copenhagen Communiqué](#). That statement called on the UN for a cap-and-trade system "to deliver a robust global greenhouse gas emissions market in order to provide the most effective, efficient and equitable emission reductions."

This is to say nothing of these companies' environmental programs; they each have one. ExxonMobil



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sponsors the [Global Climate and Energy Project](#). BP tags itself [Beyond Petroleum](#). [Shell Oil](#), [ConocoPhillips](#), [Chevron](#) and even [Halliburton](#) vehemently declare their commitment to global sustainability.

As for big money, Joanne Nova reported in [Climate Money](#) (2009), “The US government has provided over \$79 billion since 1989 on policies related to climate change.” She pointed out the hypocrisy of attacking big oil. “[I]n a distracting sideshow, Exxon-Mobil Corp is repeatedly attacked for paying a grand total of \$23 million to skeptics - less than a thousandth of what the US government has put in.” Additionally, carbon trading commodity markets worldwide dwarf even federal government spending, reaching \$126 billion in 2008 and predicted to top \$2 - \$10 trillion in the next few years.

So is big coal the culprit? Consol Energy is one of the largest coal mining companies in the U.S. and is the recipient of numerous [environmental awards](#). Its sustainability program involves wildlife management and greenhouse gas abatement programs.

[Arch Coal, Inc.](#) is the second largest U.S. coal producer. [Reuters](#) quoted its chairman and CEO, Steven F. Leer, in support of a cap and trade program “that would direct some of the funding to carbon capture and sequestration.” Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., chair of International Coal Group, Inc., agrees. He told [Business Week](#) the coal industry needs to “be a part of figuring out the [regulatory] solution, because the devil will be in the details.”

Only Gregory Boyce, chairman and chief executive of Peabody Energy Corporation, the world’s largest private coal company, stands as a lone voice in the world of coal. When [Bloomberg](#) asked him about the effects of carbon dioxide on climate change, he replied, “I think the simple answer is we don’t know.” Yet his company has its own [environmental responsibility policy](#) which has a stated mission to “leave the land in a condition equal to or better than we found it.”

The reality seems to be that Gore’s climate-change-denying hobgoblins are actually some of his best friends.



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